Eichhornia crassipes (Water hyacinth)

updated 3.11.2013

A floating perennial herb that is native to South America introduced as an ornamental into the US in 1884. It can grow quickly, forming dense mats which restrict light to the underwater environment.

Overview:

Common names: water orchid, floating water hyacinth

Ecological Threat:

- Invades freshwater lakes, reservoirs, ponds, marshes and ditches making boating, fishing, and almost all other water activities difficult
- Degrades water quality by blocking the air-water interface and greatly reducing oxygen levels in the water, impacting underwater animals such as fish
- Greatly reduces biological diversity: mats block sunlight, preventing growth of submerged and emersed plant communities and also alter animal communities by blocking access to the water and/or reducing plants the animals depend on for shelter and nesting

Classification: Caution. This is a non-regulated category.

Species Assessment Groups (SAG) were assembled to recommend a legal classification for each species considered for NR 40. The recommendation for water hyacinth was based upon a literature review developed by the department.

Identification:

Leaves: Thick green waxy leaves, rounded, circular or elliptical in shape with gently incurved sides. Leaves are formed in rosettes and get to be 6" wide and can rise between 1- 3 feet above water.

Flowers: Lavender blue with a yellow blotch. Flowers have 6 petals and are 2 inched wide.

Fruits & seeds: Three celled capsule with many seeds.

Roots: Submersed roots blue black to dark purple, feathery, dense near root crown, tips with long dark root caps.

Similar Species: May be confused with emergent form of frog's-bit, *Limnobium spongia*

Distribution:

See the reported locations of water hyacinth.

Do you know of water hyacinth locations? Send us a report.

Photos:

John Byrd, Mississippi State University,
http://www.invasive.org/browse/detail.cfm?imgnum=1391152

Karen Brown, University of Florida,
http://www.invasive.org/browse/detail.cfm?imgnum=5344034

Wilfredo Robles, Mississippi State University,
http://www.invasive.org/browse/detail.cfm?imgnum=2132054

Control*:

Mechanical: Very small populations can be controlled by pulling. Physical removal should be completed before flowering and seed set.
Chemical: Registered aquatic herbicides can provide temporary control of water hyacinth in small scale applications. 2,4 D or glyphosate can be effective.
Biological: Biological control options: *Neochetina eichhorniae*, *N. bruchi* (weevils), and *Niphograpta albiguttalis* (moth larvae) have been used in tropical and subtropical populations. No known biological controls have been tested in Wisconsin.

***Any attempted management of aquatic plants will benefit from the technical guidance of DNR staff in the Aquatic Plant Management Program. DNR Aquatic Plant Management staff should be contacted prior to implementing any aquatic invasive control methods to ensure proper permits are obtained and protocols are followed.**

Sources:

http://wiki.bugwood.org/Eichhornia_crassipes
Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants: **http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/node/141**
Invasive.org: http://www.invasive.org/browse/subinfo.cfm?sub=3020